



Your Medicine Cabinet: A Mystery?

Do you know what's in your medicine cabinet? Is it stocked and up-to-date? Unfortunately, medicine cabinets are often an area of neglect, containing an array of old medications, free samples, and items we don't even remember buying. However, it's important to know what you have and what you need...before an emergency occurs. In fact, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), you should clean out your medicine cabinet (or any area where you store medicine) at least once a year.

It's time to take a look! Make sure to:

- Check all expiration dates. Discard outdated products, as well as damaged containers and old supplies.
- Take inventory and restock products that are low or missing.
- Always store products in their original packaging (to prevent taking the wrong product and to easily access the expiration date, dosage and warning information).

Although medicine cabinets may be the traditional location for a family's supplies, the heat and humidity of a bathroom can deteriorate or affect the potency of some medicines.

A cool, dark, dry place, such as the top of a linen closet, is a better storage alternative (don't keep medicines in the refrigerator unless indicated on the label). Consider using a secure, easily transported bag or container. Whatever storage method you chose, always remember to keep medicines and supplies out of sight and reach of children and pets.

Some helpful resources:

U.S. Food and Drug Administration, <http://www.fda.gov>

American College of Emergency Physicians, <http://www.acep.org>

Home First Aid Kit

To safely and effectively treat minor ailments and injuries at home, it's important to keep basic first aid supplies on hand.

What do you need? Some suggested essentials:

- **Information**
 - First Aid manual (also consider enrolling in a first aid and CPR course)
 - Emergency phone numbers (including family physician, pediatrician, Poison Control Center and emergency services)
 - List of allergies and medications for each family member

- **Medicines**

Before administering medicine, read the label. Make sure you use correct dosages and that all medicine is age appropriate.

- Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen (for pain)
- Antihistamine (for allergies)
- Cough suppressant and decongestant tablets (for colds)
- Antacid (for upset stomach)
- Activated charcoal (Charcoal to bind ingested poison. Use only on the advice of a Poison Control Center, physician, or emergency department)
- Calibrated measuring spoon / oral medicine syringe (for administering medicine)

- **Supplies**

- Assorted bandages
- Adhesive tape
- Gauze rolls and pads
- Antiseptic wipes
- Mouth-to-mouth barrier device (either a face mask with a one-way valve or a disposable face shield)
- Antibiotic ointment
- Hydrocortisone cream
- Calamine lotion
- Medical exam gloves
- Tweezers
- Thermometer
- Scissors
- Safety pins

These items will help prepare you for an emergency at home. However, always remember to seek professional medical help when necessary.